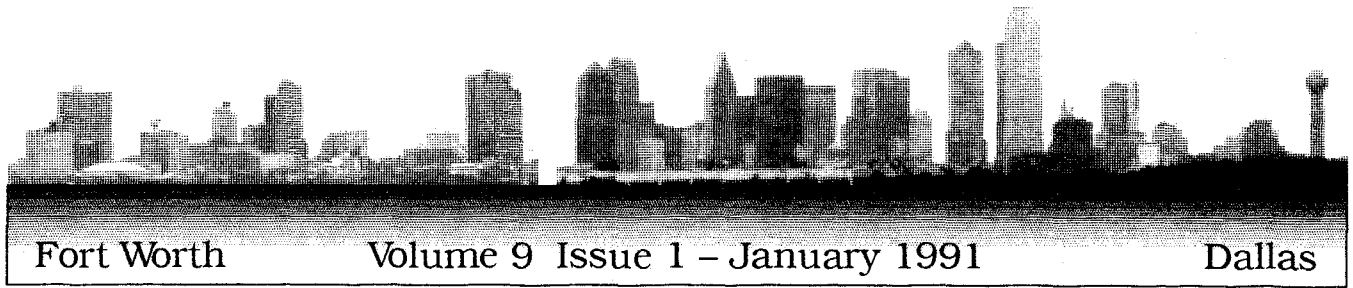


MCCC NEWS

Metroplex Commodore Computer Club



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Dallas

Imagine That!

A review of Impulse's New Ray-Tracing Powerhouse
by Patrick Hogan

Well, the "Gang at Impulse" finally came out with their long awaited next generation of rendering/animation software. They seem to have kept the good parts of *Turbo Silver*, such as easily altered attributes, textures, and brush mapping, but they have thrown out most of the bad parts such as the extremely hard to use editor.

One of the first things you'll notice, is that there are five editors called Project, Detail, Forms, Cycle, and Stage. All except Project have certain things in common. The first thing that is obvious is that *Imagine* has beat *Sculpt-Animate* by one window - that's right, *Imagine* has four of them on the screen at the same time. Three are the usual views - top/right/front - the fourth is a perspective of the object. The perspective can be simple wire-frame, solid with all hidden lines removed (lines aren't shown that can't be seen from your viewpoint), or shaded which colors the object in a 16 color grey scale. On any of the windows is the title of that window, and by simply clicking on the window title, you go to a full screen view. Click on the other window titles to go to a full screen view of that window or click on the one you are looking at to go back to the Quad-view, as Impulse calls it. Also common to all the editors, are the new pick methods. Now instead of clicking on each point, points can be selected with a drag box or lasso. They work just like they sound. With drag box, just drag a box around points you want to select and bang, they are all selected. With lasso, just draw a line around a series of point, whether they are connected or not, and zap, all points will be acted on as one.

The Forms Editor

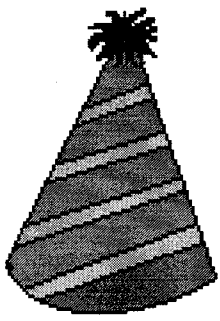
The Forms Editor is mostly used to make primitives (simple shapes put together to make a complex object) easily and quickly. It works not by having all the points of the object for you to edit, but instead you alter the basic

shape. In other words, if you wanted to make a box that was wider at the bottom than the top, you would make the form in the top view square, and make the form in the side and front views wide at the bottom and skinny at the top. It is easier than it sounds since the Form Editor has things like symmetry for the different views, so points on opposite sides or in different views can be moved as one.

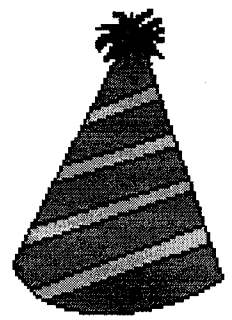
The Detail Editor

The Detail Editor will do just as it says, you can adjust all the details of an object. Here is where you apply textures (four of them at a time if you like) like brick and wood; attributes like how much and what color of light the object will reflect, absorb, and pass; brushes (any type of an IFF picture - once again four at a time if desired) that can reflect or pass light, create altitude maps (the brush will create a contour on the object, with dark colors making the deepest impression) or simply slap the picture on the object. If all these attributes sound daunting, they can be. Most folks I've talked to that didn't like *Turbo Silver* at least in part disliked the attribute requestor because it was just too much. *Imagine* has added to the attribute requestor so I doubt that many will find it any easier to use. However, I know of no other rendering software that gives you as much power of the appearance of the object.

In addition to the attribute requestor (that's right, all the above is controlled from ONE requestor), you can do things like change the size and orientation. You can extrude (make a flat object x amount deep) to a certain length or along a path, either straight or rotating as it goes, which can give you some fascinating objects. You can also perform lathe like operations called spin and sweep which let you create an object from just an outline. Added is hide points. Say you have already made an object only to find that a point in the middle needs to be moved just a bit. With hide points you can get rid of all



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the points in the way and just leave the ones you need to work on. When you switch to another pick method, all the points you got rid of will come back and the point(s) you changed will still be altered. Detail also includes magnetism: points close to the point you are moving will move also, but not quite as far, and points further away will move a little less, and so on.

Lastly, but not least, is Slice. Impulse claims they are the first to offer this boolean operation. Slice allows one object to cut a hole in another. In the tutorial that came with Imagine, I created a outline letter A, took a plane, and using slice, made the face for the A without connecting all the points myself. In addition, the plane now had a perfectly shaped A punched right though it. I will have to experiment with this some more, but it looks like some very interesting effects could be achieved with Slice.

The Cycle Editor

Next is the Cycle Editor. Think about walking. Seems simple right? Think about trying tell your object on the screen to do it. Sound tough? Not with Cycle. You work with simple stick-like things. Make them pivot, twist, or rotate. Set up key frames – ones that mark a certain point of movement. Like when you're walking your left foot is in front and the right is to the rear, next your right leg is bent and coming forward, next the right foot is in front and the left is behind you, and so on. You just set the little stick man to match those shapes, assign objects to the different parts of the stick man, and voila, you have a walking object on the screen.

The Stage Editor

Lastly, the Stage Editor, the most powerful part of Imagine in my opinion. Here you set the stage for your production – lights, the players, global conditions like ambient lighting, and special effects. In the Action Editor part of the Stage Editor, you can view everything that will happen and everything that is there or that will appear. The Stage Editor uses bar graphs so you can easily tell what is happening when. If you want a object to

What is Ray-Tracing?

A Brief Explanation by Bill Raecke

Programs such as *Imagine* are ray-tracing programs. *Sculpt-4D* and *Turbo Silver* are a couple of others. If you are not familiar with the term and have never seen one of them in action, you may be curious as to just what a program like this does. I will attempt to offer a brief explanation (emphasis on the word "brief").

With a paint program such as *Deluxe Paint III*, an artist (or would-be artist) works in a two dimensional world. Three dimensional perspectives are the artist's responsibility. There are tools such as *Deluxe Paint's* Perspective tool that can help accomplish the job, but these are just graphic tricks. The program you are using is totally unaware of shapes or patterns on the screen. As far as *D-Paint* is concerned, it is just a bunch of differently-colored dots being manipulated.

A ray-tracing program takes a different approach. In such a program, three-dimensional objects are defined and the program handles the job of displaying your objects in a realistic fashion on the two-dimensional computer screen. If you wish to draw a box, you define the box to the program. You must tell it the width, height, and depth of the object to give it size. You must tell it what color it is. What does the surface look like? Is it smooth? Rough? Shiny? Is it patterned in some way? There are many such questions to be answered. And then we must define the environment. How bright is the lighting? Where is the source of the light? How much diffusion is there? Is this a spotlight? A floodlight? The sun? And what color is the light? How about the background – what color is it? And the ground? And the Sky? Once the scene is defined, we must tell the program where we will view it from. Are we above the object? To one side? And how far away are we? How wide is the field of view?

Once we have things defined, the program takes over and "renders" the image. In a true ray-tracing program such as *Imagine*, *Sculpt* or *Turbo Silver*, each point of light on the screen is individually calculated. The program must calculate where the light arriving at that particular point came from. Was it reflected off of our object? Did it reflect off of other objects or the ground or the background before striking the object? If so, what was the effect of that interaction on the color of the light reaching that point? How bright is it? What is the effect of shadows? Was there more than one source for the light reaching that point?

To make things even more complicated, most ray-tracing programs allow you to animate your art. You define various positions and attributes over a period of time for the objects, the lighting and the camera. The program will then "animate" the scene by "rendering" each frame in the animation individually so they can be played back at 30 frames per second (or something in that neighborhood). When flashed up on the screen at that speed the effect is of smooth movement. Bear in mind that although the animation can be played at high speed, the rendering process is lengthy. A single frame can take minutes or hours depending on the complexity.

I don't mind saying that this is pretty amazing stuff to me. I have no understanding of the mathematics involved whatsoever. What I do know is that when a good ray-tracing program has worked its magic, the results can be breathtaking.

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change from a blue cube to a red sphere, you simply add the cube as an actor, click the ending frame of the animation, and type the red sphere's name in the requestor that comes up. *Imagine* will handle changing from one to the other over the course of the animation. You can also set an object to follow a path, with changes happening to the object at certain points in the path. Lights can be dimmed or brightened during the animation. Objects and lights can be hinged to other objects, so that if an object is at -100y and is hinged to one at 0, telling it to move +100y will make it move in a parabolic arc. You can also use special effects. The ones included on the disk are explode, grow, and ripple. They all work as you would imagine, explode will cause an object to blow up into its triangular components over a set number of frames, grow will make the object bigger over time, and ripple can be set to cause an object to act as a pond that had a stone thrown in it, or as a flag-like object.

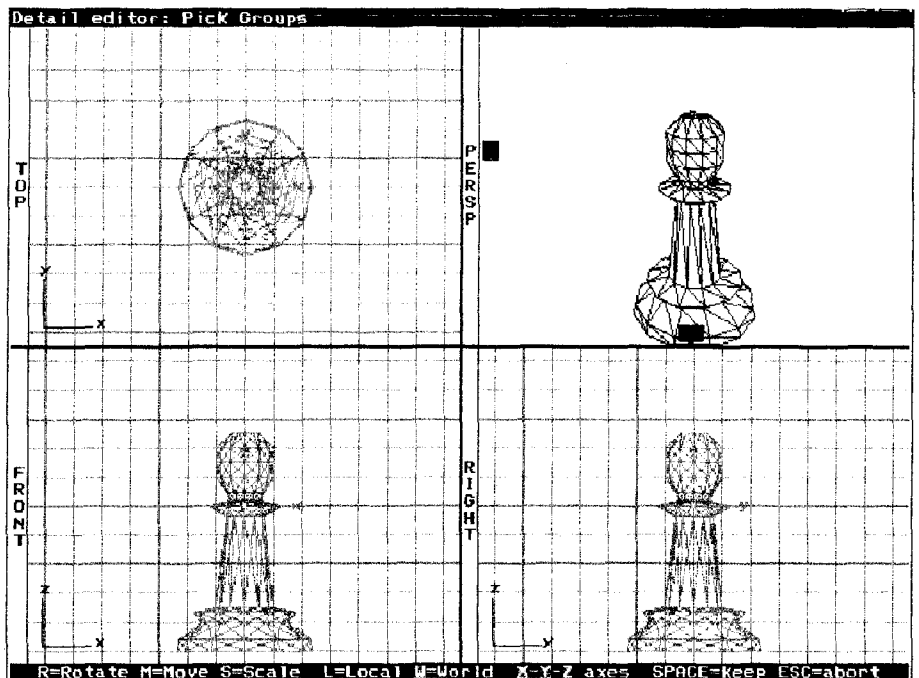
This is only a brief review, so I can't go over everything. I haven't said anything about the Project Editor, even though it is useful also. I just don't have the time. A important note: if you only have one meg on your machine, you won't be able to do much. *Imagine* is powerful and easy to use, and it would be a great addition to any animator's library.

Imagine

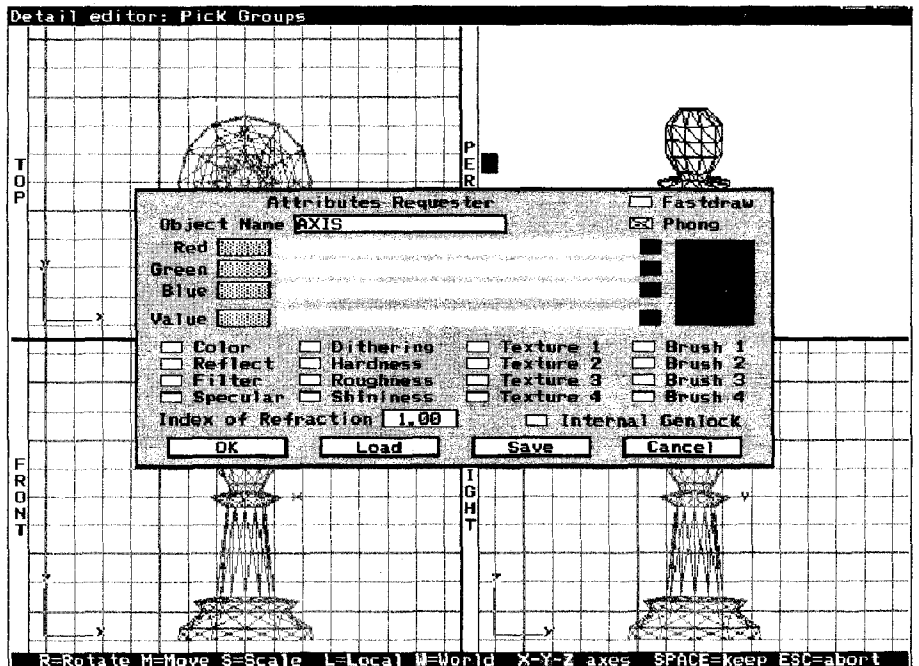
A Second Opinion

From Bill Raecke

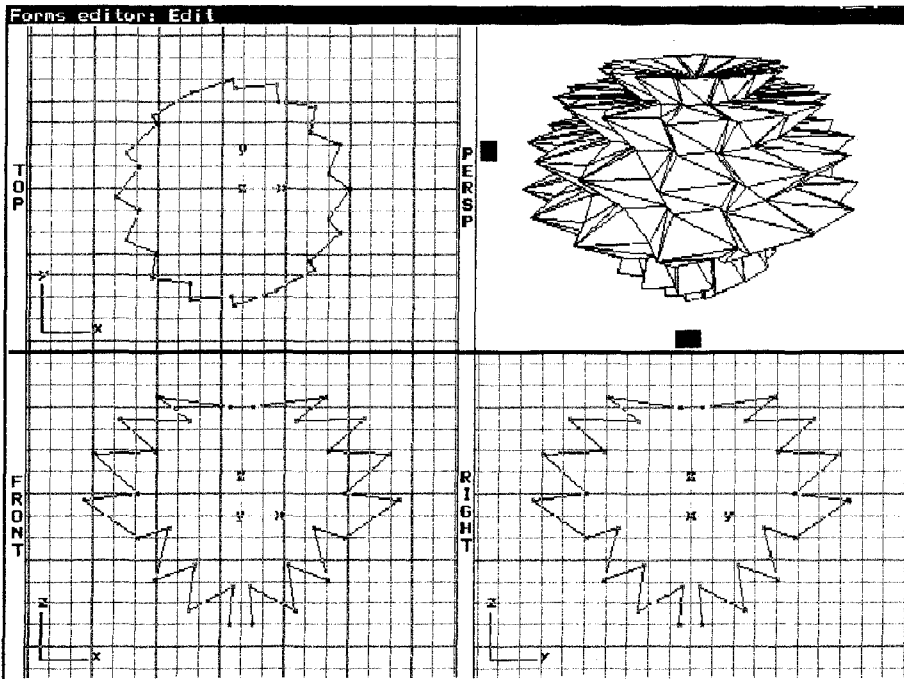
I have had *Sculpt-3D* for several years. I bought *Turbo Silver* about a year ago. After playing with each of them for a short



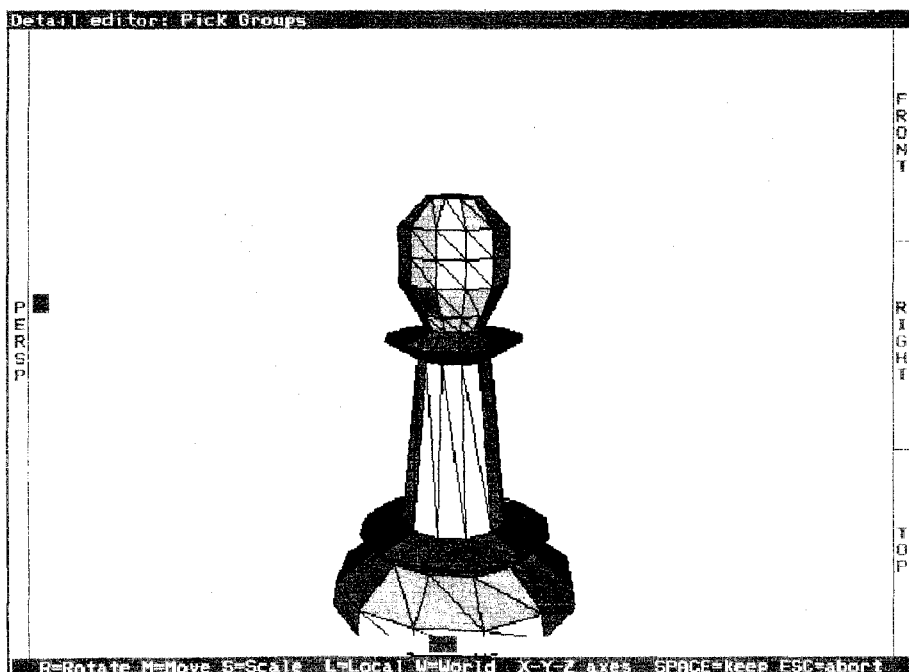
This pawn was created by drawing a single line to describe the left edge of the chess piece in the front view. The SPIN function was used to complete it automatically. To get a full screen of any view, just click on the name of the view to the left.



This is the attribute requester. This is where you define the color, texture, hardness, shininess, and other attributes of the object. By using the BRUSH option, you may use any IFF picture to pattern the surface of the object. For example, this chess piece could be wood or marble.



This is the form editor. Although this form is rather useless, it illustrates the ease of creating a complex form using Imagine's form editor with its built-in symmetry functions.



This is a full screen version of the perspective view of our favorite pawn. This has been rendered using the SOLID option. The SOLID option is extremely fast. If you click on the Perspective gadget on the left, the program returns to quad view. If you click on one of the views to the right, you get a full screen version of that view.

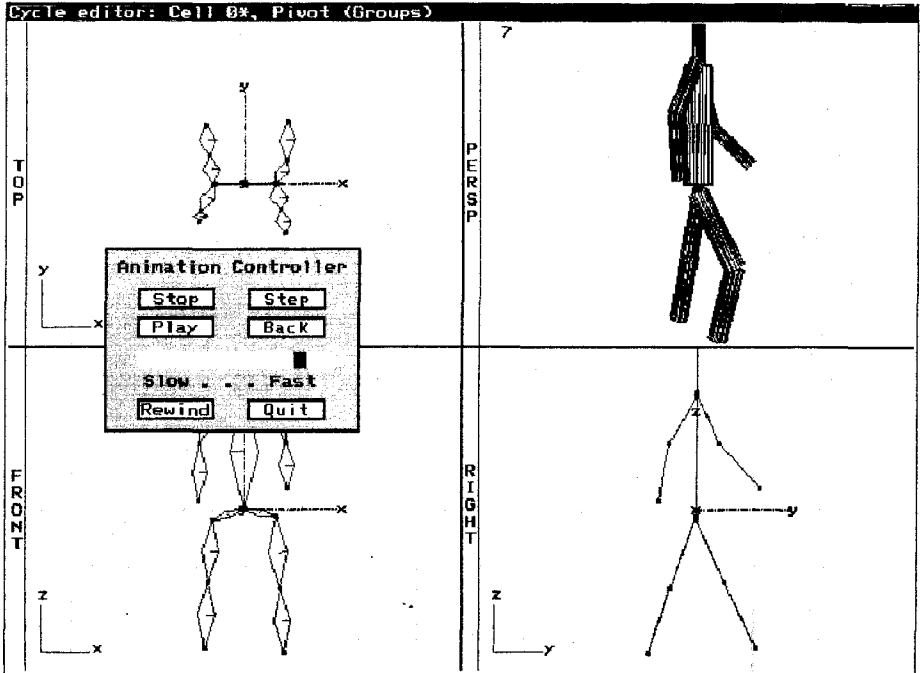
period, I lost interest. There were a couple of reasons. First, until earlier this year I had a standard Amiga with a 68000 processor. (Programs like this scream for a 68030.) Second, both are difficult for someone of my limited abilities to master. *Sculpt-3D* has a standard three-view drawing of the scene that is being worked on. Now, three-view drawings may come natural to some, but to me they are confusing. I would continually find myself rendering something that was not even close to what I had envisioned. *Turbo Silver*, although basically more powerful, is even worse when it comes to user interface. In Turbo, you get to see only one view at a time – and the views it provides require a great deal of imagination.

The big change that Imagine provides is the addition of the perspective view. With *Imagine*, Impulse is providing us the same three-view drawing provided by *Sculpt*, but in addition there is a perspective drawing provided right along side the other views so that you can really get an idea of what things look like. For me, this is invaluable. If you need a full screen view to do a little work, it is a simple mouse-click away.

One other thing that simply knocks my socks off is the Cycle Editor. As mentioned in Patrick's article, the editor uses key frames to define the animation. That means that you don't have to define every frame individually. You simply define key points in the movement and *Imagine* fills in the blanks. And I might add that it does a remarkable job. But one other point worth mentioning is the use of easily defined hierarchically related objects. When you enter the Cycle Editor, there is an axis on the screen. (Think of it as a root point.) Click on the axis and drag the mouse in any direction and a diamond shape appears. This shape defines the length and thickness of an object to be moved. Other

objects can then be attached to the same point or to the end of the diamond shape. In this way objects are related to each other. Think of the first diamond shape as an upper arm. To the end of that we could attach a forearm. Then we could attach a hand. And, of course, to the hand, we attach five fingers. With this hierarchical structure movement becomes much simpler. If we tell *Imagine* to move the forearm, it automatically knows that the hand and fingers must move with it. You don't have to define separate movements for those items. If you do want them to move independently as well, they will always move in automatic relation to the movement that the forearm is making. And once the moving objects are defined in this way, forms are attached to the diamond shapes so the object looks as it should. (In our example, hopefully like an arm, hand, and fingers.)

The Stage Editor is the final step. Objects which have been defined other places are put together here. These can be static objects or moving objects that have been defined with the cycle editor. And, since the Stage Editor can be an animation editor on its own, the animations can be quite complex, combining the separate movements of many independent objects. Following the instructions provided in the last tutorial in the manual, I was able to put together a complex animation using the pieces I assembled as I went through the book. It consists of a walking figure (put together in the Cycle Editor using just cylinder shapes) climbing over rough terrain (created in the Detail Editor from a plane) and being tracked by a searchlight (created in the Stage Editor) while the camera zooms back as it flies around the scene. It's easy to do. This is pretty amazing stuff. I stayed barefoot for quite some time (from those pesky socks getting knocked off).



This is the Cycle Editor. By building hierarchical relationships by simply connecting points and then describing key frames, animated objects are easily created. The perspective view in the screen above is in motion, giving quick verification that the object will move correctly when rendered.

Script					
Add Delete Rename Info Panels Undo Done					
FRAME NUMBER					
Highest Frame #	30	1	1111111112	2222222223	
	1234567890	1234567890	1234567890	1234567890	
CAMERA					Actor Posn. Align Size Hinge F/X
GLOBALS					Actor Posn. Align Size Hinge F/X
FORM. 1					Actor Posn. Align Size Hinge F/X
LIGHTSOURCE					Actor Posn. Align Size Hinge F/X
(new)					Actor Posn. Align Size Hinge F/X
					Actor Posn. Align Size Hinge F/X

This is the Script Requester. This is where the scene is set up. Note that multiple frames are listed across the top. By telling the program what an object will be doing at certain times, *Imagine* can create an animation.

Disney's DUCKTALES

THE QUEST FOR GOLD

A Review by Barbara Cramer

In the style of all Disney enterprises, *Ducktales: The Quest for Gold* is a delightful adventure and a fun way to spend the evening. While it requires the arcade skills of an older child (at the age of 44, this IS my exact skill level), it will appeal to young-at-heart parents as well. With three difficulty levels, you may select the number and speed of obstacles you will face.

Six games are woven into this adventure as you roam the world looking for treasures to increase your net worth. Your first challenge will be to learn how to fly Launchpad's bi-plane through skies that are littered with stormy clouds, jagged mountain peaks, jumping whales, hot-air balloons, etc. to reach the landing field where you always crash into the hangar. Having reached the destination, chosen prior to take-off, you will face one of four arcade style games.

Mountain climbing from one ledge to another is aided by your skill at throwing a rope and occasionally avoiding an oncoming bullet. You may always "duck" into a cave to take the shortcut, but you must avoid caves populated with sleeping animals. Falling is usually fatal although you are given three chances to master the mountain in the form of Huey, Dewey and Louey.

Jungle locations offer a similar challenge with the action scrolling horizontally. In the tradition of earlier games, there are snakes and panthers to avoid, swaying tree limbs to jump from, vines to swing upon and hippos to ride.

The cave sequence offers more of a gambling experience as you must navigate through a maze of

tunnels never knowing when you may encounter a deadly pit. Of course, there's a mummy chasing you too, so think fast.

Easiest of all is the photo safari. Much like a shooting gallery, you attempt to take pictures of the rare animals of the land avoiding those with a lower point count. They appear for a limited time and speed up with the onset of sunset but you only have three positions to control.

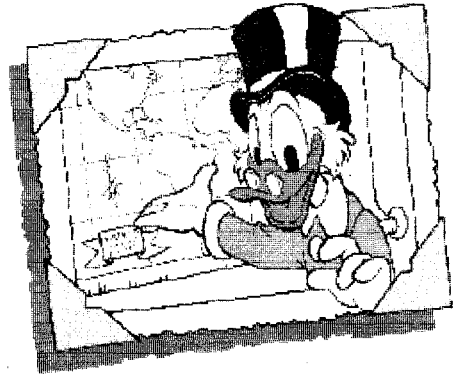
At any time during the game, you can return to your office and invest your earnings in the stock market. Although less ap-

pealing to children, this game provides a primitive experience in playing the stock market and watching the results. Periodically during the game you may find yourself returning to read the reports and

cashing in the profits. While you are back at the office you may also choose to jump into your money vault hoping to uncover a rare overlooked coin.

The full color graphics, digitized sound and animation are all quite good in the Disney tradition. Disk access will slow down the game play between sections but the disk is not protected and may be easily loaded to your hard drive. Unfortunately, *Ducktales* is strictly a one-player game; your only adversary is a computer-driven character and, of course, the games themselves.

Overall, I found Disney's *Ducktales* quite interesting, excellently executed and generally liked by people with less-than-professional arcade skills. It is a great choice to share with your child. You can always play it when they are at school or in bed!



Thought For The Month

Definition of a Grasshopotamus: A creature that can leap to tremendous heights... Once.

Maverick v1.0

A Review of the Newest Disk Copy Utility by Harold Williams

Maverick is the newest disk copy utility to appear for the Amiga market. *Maverick* is distributed by Software Support International and designed by the same folks (KJPB) that brought Commodore 64 users the *Kracker Jax*, *Bull's Eye* and *Shotgun II*, disk archival utilities. *Maverick* offers both parameter and nybble copy tools. It comes on a single non-copy protected disk. *Maverick* can be installed on a hard drive and an install utility is provided.

There are basically two types of parameters in the *Maverick* system. The first type of parameter creates a copy of the disk by either duplicating a non-standard format or patching the code that checks for a non-standard format. The second type of parameter creates a deprotected copy that can be installed on a hard drive. All of the parameters that I have tested have worked flawlessly. *Maverick's* parameter list does not include multiple occurrences of the same title. All of the other parameter copiers that I have used list some titles more than once because more than one copy protection scheme had been used for those titles. *Maverick* automatically checks a disk for the correct parameter to use. Making disks hard drive installable is a very nice feature. I installed both *PowerDrome* (Electronic Arts) and *Test Drive II* (Accolade) on my hard drive using *Maverick*. (*Test Drive II* comes with a hard drive install procedure but requires you to insert the original disk in DF0: to play the game. *Maverick* removed the "key disk" requirement.) *Maverick* includes a utility named KillDFX to scan files and change references to DF0 to some other three characters. This allows the use of an ASSIGN command to facilitate hard drive installation.

The nybble copy routines included in *Maverick* seem similar to the nybble utilities included in other copy programs. There are options to set the sync value to the standard \$4489 or some other value. Sync can be turned off, or index sync can be used. The nybbler also allows selection of tracks from 0 to 84 for the copy attempt.

I did encounter a couple of problems. First, the hard drive installation would not work with my system. I do not have an autoboot/automount hard drive. *Maverick* will not run unless you boot the disk. Booting up with the *Maverick* disk left me without a hard drive. Booting my hard disk meant *Maverick* would not run. There are a couple of ways to get around this problem. I could have modified a copy of the *Maverick* disk to mount my hard drive. But after examining the *Maverick* disk I saw that it used a special font. After copying the font to my system's FONTS: device I was able to run *Maverick* from my hard drive WorkBench. This allowed me to run the

install procedure. *Maverick* also has a bug in the way it displays the list of parameters. Occasionally the list will disappear. Re-selecting the list will make the list reappear. The only other

problem I have noticed is in the instructions *Maverick* gives for using the ASSIGN command after running KillDFX. The instructions are simply wrong. If you follow them it will not work. If you understand the ASSIGN command this is no problem, but if you are just beginning to learn AmigaDOS you might kill a lot of time trying to figure this out.

If you are in the market for a disk archival utility, *Maverick* is well worth a close look. It has a very impressive list of parameters. All of them that I have tested have worked. Registered owners of *Maverick* will be offered a \$20 upgrade about every three months. The documentation also indicates a hardware enhancement will available soon. This device will control the speed of the disk drive to allow copies of disks that would have required a custom parameter.

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Amiga

A Performance Comparison Between Various Amiga Models by Johnny C. Kitchens

Performance is a subject that pops up in many areas. It has become the deciding factor in many a sale of just about everything. Performance can be used to describe just about every asset of a product, and there is usually a test to prove the validity of that asset. For computers there are as many tests as there are computers, or so it seems. They are all based on measuring the factors that govern its basic performance and then combining the factors to get a result. These results have been given the most amazing names ever conceived. I suppose that the computer deserves such unique names. I decided to test a cross section of Amigas using some of these tests. Here are a few of the more well known performance tests by name and what they mean, I hope. As you read these descriptions take a look at the chart to see the results of these tests.

THE TESTS

MIPS – Literally means "Millions of Instructions Per Second". The higher the number the better. The speed of the CPU here really shines. The system performance has a small effect. Take notice of the GVP and 3000 performance for system effect.

Drystones – I have had more people ask me, "What are those?". It's frustrating. Drystones put the system through a series of loops that measure how many loops can be performed in a given length of time. The bigger the number the better. Strangely enough I've found so many different measures of Drystones, that it's hard to say which is right. Oddly enough only one version worked on all configuration of the Amiga. This version gives a choice of using the registers or not. Only the 1000 and the 2000 showed a difference between the choices. GVP's 030 board showed a difference without the 32 bit memory added. One version I recently found would not work on a stock Amiga. I was only able to test the GVP with memory, 3000 with 2.0 OS, and 3000 with 1.3 OS. They turned in results of 12000, 10000, and 8333 respectively.

SinePlot – As the name says, this test plots a Sine wave. As the test shows it really puts a load on the CPU. The addition of a math chip really moves it along. The smaller the number, which is time in seconds, the faster the computer. This test comes from the now defunct CMI company which made an accelerator board for the Amiga.

Crazy – Here's another test from CMI. This test also shows the math chip's benefit to the system. It can be described as multifaceted circles drawn in different sizes

in a certain amount of time. The figures you see are seconds. Once again smaller is better.

CPU-Speed – This program comes from Imtronics. It provides a graph that compares your Amiga to a stock one which gets a rating of one. Higher is better for sure. Math chips had no effect at all here. I am at a loss to explain the 14mhz Amiga result of .90.

Speed – This is a test to compare your Amiga to a stock Amiga and one equipped with an A2620 card. Higher is better. You can see that stock Amigas show about 1/3 its speed.

THE COMPUTERS

What I used to come by my results were a complete cross section of the Amiga community. The 500 is running with one meg and 1.2 in the Kickstart. These results should give a 500 owner a bit of prestige. This was a surprise for sure. My only clue is that the 68000 shows to be running at 7.18mhz in the 500. The 1000 in the test was fitted with the CMI accelerator board. This gives me a choice of a 7.16mhz or 14.32mhz 68000, plus a 14.32mhz 68881 math chip. It's obvious that the faster speed helps some, but the math chip shows big gains with the tests that take advantage of the chip. These programs were created to show the advantages of the chip. Why the lower figures for Drystones and CPU-Speed is beyond me. The 2000's only advantage over the 500 and 1000 will be its Super Agnus and 1.3 in ROM. Sorry – the 500 still wins.

The A2620 is the same one that appeared in the original 2500. As you can see, getting your hands on one of these is still worthy of your time. With its price falling all the time, it's becoming a performance bargain. For some reason I didn't test the A2620 card using Drystones with registers. More than likely it's the same.

The GVP A3001 68030 accelerator board has received more praise in magazines for its performance than any of its competitors, thus the competition usually compares itself to the GVP board. It's the one I chose for myself and so here it is in two forms. I tested it with and without its 32 bit memory daughter board. If you are thinking of upgrading your 2000 or older 2500 then GVP offers you the ability to upgrade in stages. I was running it without the memory daughter board, but I did have a memory expansion in the form of Microbotics' 8-UP board with two megs on it. It is definitely a performer in this configuration, but add the 32 bit memory and it's a screamer. Compare to the 3000 and you see that the 2000 still can show the new kid a few things.

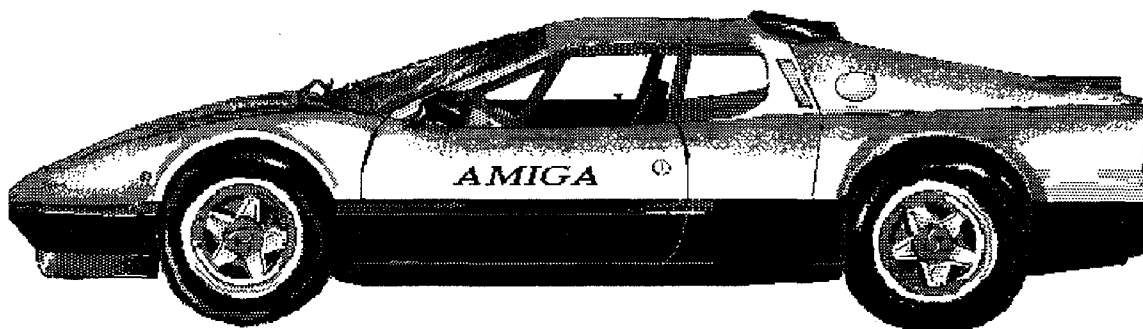
To test the 3000 I had to go to Amazing Computers in Dallas and borrow theirs for an hour. Thanks, Amazing, for giving me the time. I decided to test the 3000 using both 1.3 and 2.0. After seeing the results I can only say I'm ready. I want my 2.0. In one test we see almost a 25% improvement in performance between the two operating

systems. Part of this advantage could be due to the fact that 2.0 is located on the harddrive and then installed into the 32 bit memory. The 1.3 is still located in ROM. 2.0 should still be a boost to performance in any form.

and no two have had the same crystal. They are very close but still different. All of these tests I used are available in the club library. If you are curious, test yours and compare. It's going to be interesting to see how fast the 68040 runs in the Amiga. 'Til then enjoy what's available. Remember there are still people using the Timex/Sinclair...

THE SUMMARY

Please remember as you read these figures that your results may vary. I've looked into several Amigas now



Amiga Performance Comparison				With Math Chip	14 mhz		A2620	28 mhz GVP 030		25 mhz 3000	
500	1000	2000	With Math Chip		With Math Chip	w/o memory		with memory	1.3	2.0	
MIPs	.7960	.7362	.7810	Same	.9302	Same	3.95	8.33	8.67	7.61	7.63
Drystones <i>with Registers</i>	450	396	446	Same	431	Same	N/A	377	3571	2779	2941
Drystones <i>without Registers</i>	450	393	438	Same	427	Same	1282	909	3571	2777	2941
SinePlot	52.20	55.47	53.20	2.47	47.17	2.33	1.2	1.43	.50	.63	.47
Crazy	63.10	57.38	69.45	10.18	49.66	9.83	4.27	5.38	2.83	3.70	2.83
CPU Speed	1.00	1.00	1.00	Same	.90	Same	4.03	5.96	11.42	7.61	10.96
Speed <i>compared to</i>											
Stock	1.01	.99	1.00	1.017	1.11	1.14	3.97	1.59	8.35	6.05	6.31
A2620	.33	.33	.33	.33	.37	.37	1.0	.53	2.78	2.01	2.27

The SuperDisks

Library Information
From Harold Williams

The SuperDisks are largely made up of collections of various types of utilities. But, for the rare Amiga owner that might want to have a little fun with his computer, there are four disks of games in the SuperDisk collection. The games on these four disks have been selected from the huge number of games in the 900 disk MCCC library. There are a total of 26 games on these four disks.

SuperDisk Games01 contains ten games. Included on this disk is a PacMan clone (PacMan '87), a Space Invaders clone (Amoeba), an Asteroids clone (Cosmoroids), a Qix clone (Trix) and a Tetris clone (theT). These are all outstanding games with terrific arcade style action.

SuperDisk Games02 has a Shanghai style game (ChinaChallenge), an electric train set simulator (ElectricTrain), a Master Mind clone (MM), along with five other games. Wordhai is a unique word game that could cause you to lose hours of sleep. This is another collection of terrific games, but this time the emphasis is on puzzler solving.

SuperDisk Games03 contains only three games. BlackJackLab is a complete blackjack simulation/training program. The game can be configured to play by various casino rules. The games can be played one-on-one with

the dealer or you can have a full table of hands being played. This is the best blackjack game you will find on a computer. SnakePit was a commercial game, but now this version has been released for free distribution. You guide a snake through a maze. The snake has to eat the pellets scattered around in the maze, but the pellets make the snake grow. SnakePit is very addictive. It is easy to play, but difficult to master. The third game on this disk is WellTrix. WellTrix plays much like the 3-D version of Tetris called Welltris. This one starts out easy but quickly gets tough.

SuperDisk Games04 was introduced in December. There are five games on this disk. Ball is a Breakout/Arkanoid clone. My daughter, Monica, has really enjoyed this one. She has rarely gotten hooked on my computer games, but this one she plays almost every day. DownHill Challenge is an alpine skiing game. I've been playing this one while I wait for the snow to get to Colorado. Drip is a really a PacMan style game, but the screen layout is so different it feels like a completely new game. The graphics and music are terrific. (Drip will occasionally lock up after a game has completed, you will have to reboot.) Slot is a Connect-4 type game (the computer is very good!), and Thieves is a solitaire game.

You can find the SuperDisks on the treasurer's table at each of the Amiga chapter meetings. The disks are available for one dollar each. The SuperDisks can also be found in the club library.

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(214) 437-9119

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P.O. Box 123225
Fort Worth, Texas 76121
(817) 737-3297

Sof-Tex

C64, C128, Amiga Repair
(817) 577-0410 (Metro)

Amiga Library News

Public Domain and Shareware Picks
From Bill Raecke

MegaD by John L. Jones

MegaD is a directory utility. Wait – don't skip ahead yet! I know we all have our fill of directory utilities and by now we all have one we are content with. But for those who are relatively new to the Amiga and not quite so set in their ways – and for those who are always willing to give something new a try – read on. MegaD is a little different from the directory utility you have been using.

Its main departure is the way that it handles the disks and directories themselves. With other utilities you have one or two areas of a window that show you the contents of one or two directories at a time. The size of the list is fixed. If you want to see a third directory, you must replace one of those currently displayed. With MegaD, you may have as many directories displayed as you want. Each one that you open is displayed in its own sizable window. This could quickly become confusing if carried to extremes but it has a lot of potential. To copy files, for example, you highlight files on any number of

displayed directory lists. Then you activate (by clicking on) the window of the directory you wish to copy TO, select copy, and all the files that are highlighted are copied to the specified destination.

All the normal configuration settings are available and all the normal functions are present. For many of us it will take some getting used to (old habits die hard) but it is certainly worth a look. It has been released as shareware and is available on MCCC-A_242.

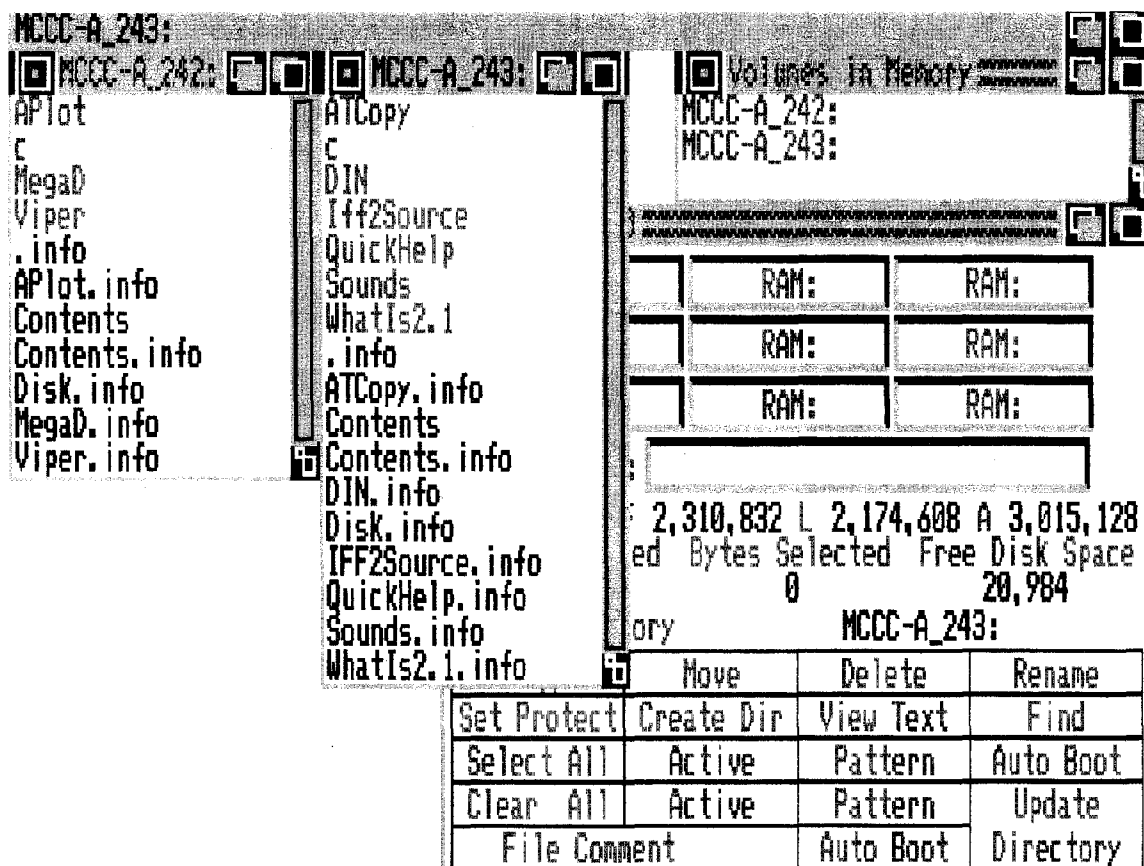
Sound Collection

This is not a specific program I can write about. It is, instead, a collection of sound files. If you collect these (and who doesn't?) you will want to add this set to your collection. There is a nice bullfrog croak and there is a VERY nice thunderclap captured in Rome, Italy. (Italian thunder seems to sound much the same as it does here – but it is a very nice sound effect nonetheless).

But the stars of the collection in my mind are the cartoon clips. Converted from the MAC by Lance Pearson,

the collection includes several clips starring Daffy Duck, the famous Road Runner "Beep Beep", the terrific clip by Yosemite Sam getting a hot-foot, Elmer Fudd telling us to "be vewy, vewy quiet" cause he's hunting "wabbit", and even some by Bullwinkle, Rocky and Boris Badenov.

You've got to get these. Check out MCCC-A_243.



The Write Stuffing

Printing Labels with Your C64 and The Write Stuff By Sandy Dippollet
Reprinted from FCUG/64UM

You don't need a special program to make mailing labels; The Write Stuff does the job easily. Here's how:

Blank adhesive labels on tractor feed backing are available in several sizes and formats. You will find that the single strip 3 1/2 x 1 inch version will prove suitable for most applications.

Labels are usually superior to individual typing in two situations: 1) where you have a list of addresses for a mailing, such as a club news bulletin 2) where you have a single addressee frequently used. This could be, for example, return address labels for yourself or mailing labels for relatives.

THE SINGLE LABEL

Starting with a blank screen, press return on line one, the name and address on lines 2, 3 and 4 (press return on line 5, 6 and 7), the name and address again on lines 8, 9 and 10 (press return on 11 and 12). If using 4 line addresses enter on lines 2,3,4 and 5 and on 8,9,10 and 11; (press return on lines 1,6,7 and 12). The reason for this format is that the minimum page length for TWS is 10, so we'll use a 12 line length to cover two one inch labels at 6 lines per inch. Your individual label file should look like this:

```
<-
Name
Street
City State Zip
<-
<-
<-
Name
Street
City State Zip
<-
<-
```

Now use your up arrow, cursors and return to get into the print menu. Set the right margin at 0 (remember to use the + and - keys to change the values for the parameters reached with the up and down cursor). The left margin at about 4, and the top and bottom margins at 0. Set the page length at 12 and the page width at about 35. Set your printer at the top of a blank label and print one copy. If the two labels you get are not properly located vertically, re-adjust the platen. When OK return to the print menu and set the number of copies to be printed at half the number of labels you want. That's all there is to it. (If you want to get fancy enter CTRL 1c before each

line of label text and set your printer menu left margin at 0 and labels will be centered). This program is not limited to address labels. I've used it to make multiple labels for my wife's preserves and labels for asking borrowers to return pocket books from a library a club maintains for its members. Your message can be anything your printer can handle on six lines.

LABELS FOR A MAILING LIST

The procedure is the same as for a single label except that each address doesn't have to be centered twice. Think of the list as a series of modules of six lines - the first a return, followed by the address, followed by enough returns to total six lines. Thus you can mix three and four line addresses. To avoid wasting label stock, preview your printing using the screen option before the printer option, the dotted lines signifying page breaks on the screen should be located between addresses. If not, the error can be readily spotted and corrected. Label list can be saved like any other text. Individual addresses can be changed by overtyping, removed by placing the cursor on the line above the address and pressing CTRL followed by 6 deletes, or inserted by going to the insert mode if you are not already there, using CTRL-I to toggle to this mode and, starting on the line above the address to follow, enter the six lines of the new address module.

One last note: The printing menu has default values which we can change for individual texts. As we don't want to change the defaults on the program disk, we can customize the default for individual texts such as an address list. At the top of your list enter the following line: CTRL,2,rm0,lm4,tm0,bm0,p112,pw35,RETURN (do not enter the commas). The control codes should appear in reverse on your screen. Now, whenever you call up the address list or single label text, the printer format defaults should be correct for your labels.

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MAC to the Max

Experiences with A-MAX by Jeff Ingraham

From the Newsletter of the Amiga Users of the Heartland

After more than a year of using A-MAX, the MacIntosh emulator for the Amiga, I thought I would offer some of my insights into its strengths and weaknesses. I am forced to use Apple equipment in my job as a teacher in the Omaha Public Schools, so I was very excited when the A-MAX emulator came out. It has performed better than I could have possibly hoped - with one exception: hard drive support.

For a couple of months, I had to use an unexpanded Mac Plus with two floppy drives. When saving an average size file with Page Maker, I would have to do at least 25 disk swaps. At that time, I vowed never to use another MacIntosh Computer system without a hard drive. When I found that A-MAX would not work with a hard drive, I was quite disappointed, but the problem is not as bad as it seems for two reasons: 1) While MacIntosh computers are limited to a maximum of two floppy drives, the Amiga with A-MAX can use up to four. This is a major consideration, since one drive needs to be reserved for the System software, one for the application, and one for the data disk. 2) Hard drive support is now available with A-

MAX, and was soon after its release with the use of a Trump-card Hard Drive Controller. A-MAX II promises hard drive support with any controller.

Software compatibility has been outstanding! There have been only two major software packages I have tried which would not run on my Amiga. These are FileMaker II and PowerPoint. Everything else I have tried has worked perfectly. I have tried, or read about, at least 50 major software packages which will work using A-MAX. Below is a partial list of software I know to work well with A-MAX.

A major point to consider is cost. You could buy an Amiga 500, 1084 stereo color monitor, A-MAX, Mac drive, Mac ROMs, Mac System Software, Extra Amiga drives, and extra memory combined for less than the list price of the lowest priced Mac at \$1799. The Mac Plus would have no extra memory and only one floppy drive, which is nearly useless. A practical minimal Mac Plus system would include a hard drive or at least a second floppy drive, plus extended memory. Without those added items it is unable to work efficiently with a large number of programs.

A-MAX SOFTWARE COMPATIBILITY

Page Maker 2.0
MicroSoft Works 1.1 and 2.0
MicroSoft Word 4.0
Word Perfect 3.0
Hyper Card
Max Write
Mac Write
Mac Draw
Mac Paint
Mac Draw II
Mac Paint II
Mac Atlas
Map Maker
Smart Com
Calendar Maker
Aldus Freehand
Mac One Write
Print Shop Mac

Pyware Music Writer
Community Link Software
Adobe Illustrator
Digital Darkroom
Font/DA Mover
Mac 3D
Video Works
LightSpeed C
FullPaint
Writenow!
MacTools 6.3
MacChallenge
MacAsm
Manx Aztec C
Ready Set Go 4.5
EVERY Public Domain program I have tried thus far!

FastBlit Exposed

Users Beware

From the Newsletter of the Amiga Users of the Heartland

The program *FastBlit*, which was recently published among the Fish collection and has found its way onto numerous BBS's around the country, now appears to be Not A Good Idea.

Program pathologists meeting on Jay Miner's "The Mission" BBS in Mountain View, California (415-967-2021) have determined that despite its claims to improve the speed of blitter-based operations, *FastBlit* is likely to make your entire system perform worse, and can even cause errors in accessing your disk drives.

The author of *FastBlit* claims that it will accelerate graphics based operations, likening it to *FastFonts* or *BlitzFonts* for the blitter. This claim may have some basis in fact, but few who ran the program were able to detect much of a difference. Assuming the truth of the claim, any speed increase on the part of blitter operations must, of necessity, come at the expense of the CPU. The idea is that *FastBlit* gives greater priority to blitter operations during those times when there is contention between the custom chips and the CPU.

The Amiga system software and hardware are

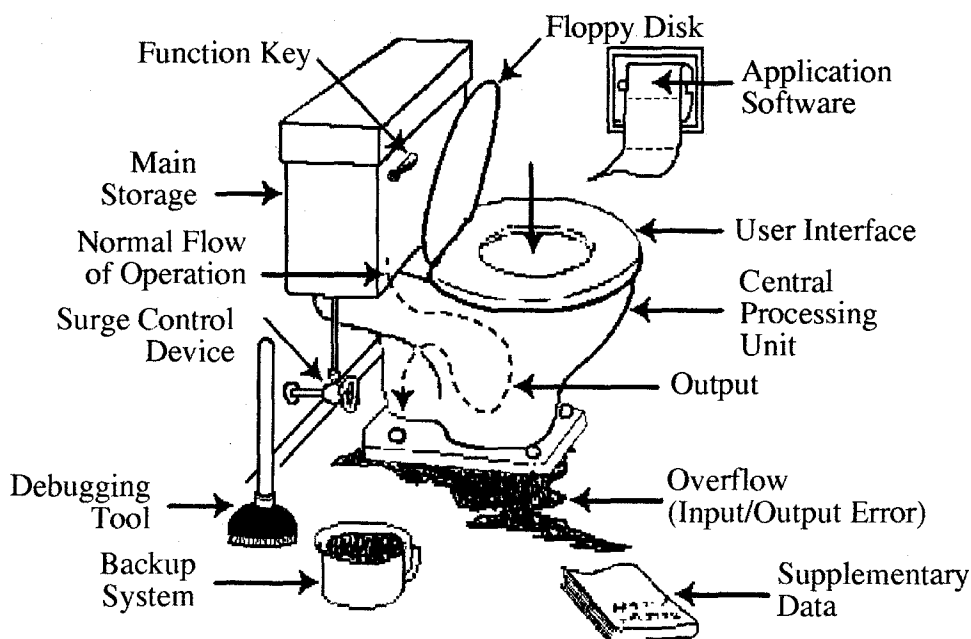
designed so that the custom chips will, at times, have priority over the CPU, but only when it is appropriate. *FastBlit* assures that the blitter always has priority over the CPU, without regard to propriety, by setting the so-called "nasty bit" (DMACON Bit #10) in the custom chip region. As a result, screen operations may be handled slightly faster, but the net effect is that overall system performance may suffer, sometimes catastrophically.

For example, when AmigaDOS reads a floppy both the CPU and the blitter get involved in the process. Normally the system arbitrates the contention for buss time between the two in such a way that each has its fair share of time in which to accomplish its mission. But when *FastBlit* has assured that the blitter may hog the buss at the CPU's expense, the CPU doesn't have a chance to get its job done in a timely fashion. The result may be read/write errors.

Discovery of *FastBlit*'s heinous nature is attributed to Paul Kienitz, who also discovered that after setting the custom chips' "nasty bit", *FastBlit* does not turn the bit off, even when the program claims to have been deactivated.

Your best bet: avoid *FastBlit* altogether.

Understanding the Technology



Amiga By-The-Loop Brent Wood

Congratulations to the new club and chapter officers and thanks to those officers who elected to continue in their posts. All officers and their phone numbers are listed elsewhere in the newsletter. If you have a question or a suggestion feel free to contact them. The new year promises to be exciting for both the Amiga and the club.

Our presentation in December was the infamous NewTek Video Toaster. David Johnson,

manager of Amazing Computers Fort Worth, brought his store demo unit and associated extra equipment and proceeded to wow the forty-two attendees with the capabilities of this hardware.

software combination. The Amiga now has the ability to produce almost anything you see on

broadcast television.

The Toaster includes software that controls the hardware and allows you to paint in 16 million colors (ToasterPaint), render in 16 million colors (LightWave), create and display text and graphic characters (Character Generator) and switch between multiple video

mailing label for your membership expiration date and renew your membership if necessary!)

Amiga North Dallas Genny White

Happy New Year! Here we have another of those "tense situations"... do I use present tense, past tense, or future tense for the December meeting, which will roll around AFTER this is written? That's what we get for scheduling meetings late in the month, I guess. Well, here's my best shot: In December we

will have had a wonderful meeting, at which we will have had an interesting visit with Don Dusky of Commodore and will have enjoyed a lot of his treats! We will have had several Amigas loaded with assorted games and things of interest, and will have shared much interesting chatter. We will have elected our chapter officers, and I will have taken notes to add to the February newsletter of anything unexpected. You will have wished you had been there, if you weren't. Confused? Me, too! Ah, deadlines...

In January (returning to present tense), we will be seeing a demo of assorted Public Domain telecommunications software, presented by Danny Barnett. We should have a phone line in our meeting room, and can try calling out to any modems we happen to have phone numbers for. Also the usual good stuff... local gossip, bug-swapping, library rummaging, door

COMING IN JANUARY

To Amiga By-The-Loop
January 8, 1991
7:30 pm
Applied Engineering
The Enhancement Experts

Makers of:
DataLink 2000
DataLink Express
AB High Density 3.5" Drive
AB 880K Drive

To Amiga North Dallas
January 16, 1991
7:30 pm
Telecommunications
Extravaganza

Demonstrations of
Public Domain and
Sharware Terminal Packages
Live - On Line

And Lots Of Other Great Stuff
At Lots Of Other Great Meetings

sources (Switcher). See last month's newsletter for complete details. If you haven't seen a Toaster in action, get over to an Amazing store and prepare to be amazed!

We also heard from Trisha Thacker, SysOp of the Home Connections BBS. This system allows users with modems and ANSI compatible terminals to access local and national real estate listings 24 hours a day. The number is 817-572-5181 and access is free. If you are in the market for a house give it a call.

The next meeting of the Loop chapter will be January 8, 1991 (Happy New Year!) 7:30 pm at the North Richland Hills Community Center. Start out the year with your support of the club and the Amiga.

(P.S. Now's the time to check your newsletter

TOASTER

prizes and pleasant conversation. Come on down on Wednesday, January 16th, 1991!

Thanks to all who brought goodies to the Christmas party! It's a long trip for us North Dallas folks, but it was worth it. Hope your holidays were merry! By the way... is anybody starting a new software fixing company or planning to hitch a one-way ride to another planet in 9 years, when all the systems in the world with hard coded "19nn" dates blow up? Myself, I haven't decided which way to go. Think about it... till next time!

Arlington/GP Eddie Allen

It is the season of merriment and short notices. In November Glen dissected the disk drive alignment scenario. The December meeting has scheduled the BASIC/C comparison. We will also work on a new officer slate. In future months, we hope to bring discourses on different programming language alternatives, including C, Assembler, and Pascal.

Any ideas you might have as to future programs would be very welcome, especially if it con-

cerns something that is of immediate relevancy to yourself.

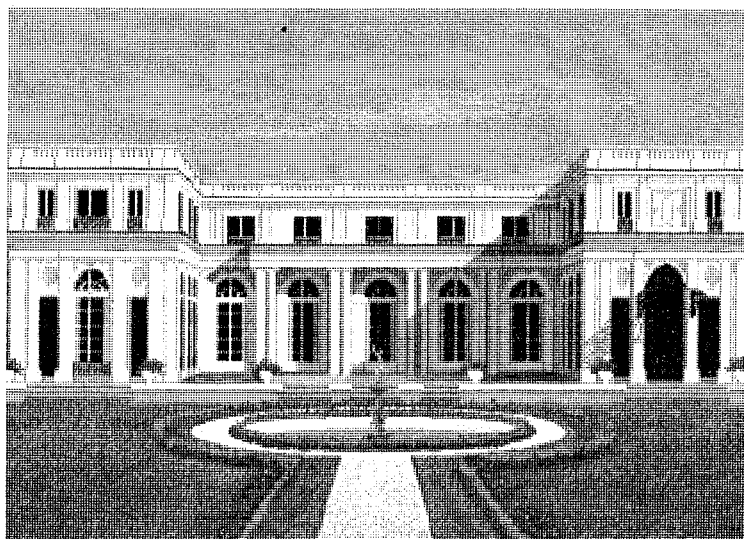
This is short, but we look forward to seeing

each of you at the next meeting. Have a merry Christmas and happy new year.

Programming SIG Kevin Wambsganz

Nov 17 Meeting:

We started our first exciting Programming SIG meeting with 11



people attending. Currently, we are temporarily meeting at 4843 Keller Spring Rd. near the intersection of Addison and Keller Springs Roads at 1:00 p.m. on the first and third Saturday of each month. At the last meeting, we talked about the scope of the SIG, which will include projects we will work on, general programming discussions, Amiga news, and demonstrations of programming tools. Kevin Wambsganz demonstrated Power Windows - a window construction tool, and Woody Pope walked through code using windows and menus structures.

Dec 1 Meeting:

Started the meeting with lots of software, ideas, and programming help to share. Woody Pope shared a program that displays the positions of the planets at any time y o u

request. He wrote this himself. Neat program. Woody plans to expand the program to include detail information about the planets and their moons. Kevin Wambsganz shared two disks of public domain software with source code from Fred Fish, these programs were copied to members' disks as possible projects to work on - improve the software. Another possible project was a sound sampler, made from scratch, better than most commercial products for only \$50 (from Amazing Computing magazine). Many other products, programming tips, and ideas were shared.

Next Meeting times at 4843 Keller Springs Rd 1:00 p.m. (near corner of Addison and Keller Springs Roads). Call Kevin Wambsganz 214-221-8652 for more info.

Jan 5, 1991
Jan 19, 1991
Feb 2, 1991

VidSIG Jack DeTore

The news this month is that VidSIG plans a meeting in January that will feature the Video Toaster. The fact that these meetings go into some depth with new hardware and software developments means that they run longer on the subject than a chapter can afford to spend. We have a tentative date as the third or fourth Saturday in January at SimuFlite. More details later as we zero in on the availability of equipment for the day.

Another chunk of news is the new VidSIG corner on the Club BBS. Any member of the BBS has access to it. It's under Mail: Public Messages: Item 7 (VidSIG). In this area will be posted answers to questions you may have about video/computer activity, meeting notices, and other news about VidSIG. Any BBS member may upload questions, comments or news... so don't be bashful.

CHAPTER

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The Fine Print

The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club

Statement of Purpose

The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club is a not-for-profit organization devoted to the collection and dissemination of computer knowledge, to the encouragement of computer education, and to the use of Commodore computers in the home, at school, and in business.

Legal Stuff

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Meetings and Membership

Our meetings are open to all. Family membership dues are \$20 per year or \$12 for six months. and entitle the member to a monthly mailed copy of the MCCC News, free access to the club's extensive public domain and shareware software library, and discounts at many area merchants. An additional \$12 annual fee provides access to the MCCC multi-user Bulletin Board System.

The MCCC News

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Articles

Members are encouraged to submit articles. Articles should be submitted as ASCII text. They may be uploaded to the MCCC BBS, to StarText (address "MCCC"), or on disk. If these methods are not possible, I will, as a last resort, accept printed articles. If graphics need to be included they may be submitted as Amiga IFF files, PageStream structured drawings, or, again as a last resort, printed output.

Deadline

The deadline for submissions to the MCCC News is the Monday following the third Saturday of each month. Payment must accompany all ad copy. Make checks payable to MCCC and mail to P.O. Box 813, Bedford, Texas 76095.

Extra Copies

Extra Copies of the MCCC News may be obtained for \$1 per copy. Orders should be forwarded to the club along with the required fee. Orders must be received by the regular newsletter deadline.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jan 5,19 Programmer SIG
1:00 pm
4843 Keller Springs Road, Dallas
Kevin Wambganz, 214-221-8652

Jan 8 Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:30 pm - N.Richland Hills Community Center
Loop 820 at Rufe Snow, N.Richland Hills
David Owens, 817-577-2304

Jan 8 Arlington/Grand Prairie Chapter
7:00 pm - Stoneridge Homeowners Assn. Clbse.
500 Grants Parkway, Arlington
Glen Herring, 817-572-0489

Jan 10 Amiga West Chapter (forming)
7:30 pm - Ridgmar Manor Clubroom
2200 Taxco, Fort Worth
Jack Smith, 817-731-8108

Jan 12 Fort Worth Chapter
1:30 pm - West Berry Church of Christ
2701 West Berry, Fort Worth
John Sookma, 817-293-8691

Jan 12 Arlington/Grand Prairie Workshop
1:30 pm - Grand Prairie Library
Grand Prairie
Jerry Hiatt, 817-649-1358

Jan 16 Amiga North Dallas Chapter
7:30 pm - Richardson Civic Center
411 West Arapaho, Richardson
Craig Bird, 817-540-3360

Jan 17 Amiga Central Chapter
7:30 pm - Arlington Community Center
2800 S. Center, Arlington
Ray Howard, 214-660-4819

Jan 19 Hurst-Euless-Bedford Chapter
1:30 pm - St. Paul Presbyterian Church
4517 Rufe Snow Drive, N.Richland Hills
Jesse Carden, 214-890-0426

Feb 2 MCCC Board of Directors
10:00 am - N.Richland Hills Community Center
Loop 820 at Rufe Snow, N.Richland Hills
Craig Bird, 817-540-3360

February Newsletter Deadline - January 21

NORMAL MEETING SCHEDULE

1st Sat MCCC Board of Directors
1st Sat Programmer SIG
2nd Tues Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
2nd Tues Arlington/Grand Prairie Chapter
2nd Thurs Amiga West Chapter
2nd Sat Fort Worth Chapter

2nd Sat Arlington/Grand Prairie Workshop
3rd Wed Amiga North Dallas Chapter
3rd Thurs Amiga Central Chapter
3rd Sat HEB Chapter
3rd Sat Programmer SIG

MCCC NEWS

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Bedford, Texas 76095

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